

Glossary

This glossary will help readers to understand the meanings of key words that appear in this handbook.

When words may be difficult to understand, an example of use may follow the definition.

The word that is bracketed after an entry relates to the particular context in which the word is being defined – for example, arrested (police).

A slash (/) separates different definitions.

AD	Anno Domini – referring to the number of years after the birth of Jesus Christ – used as a time reference.
Allegiance	Loyalty to something – for example, to a leader, a faith or a country.
Armed forces	The army, navy and air force which defend a country in times of peace and war.
Arrested (police)	Taken by the police to a police station and made to stay there to answer questions about illegal actions or activity.
Assault	The criminal act of using physical force against someone or of attacking someone – for example, hitting someone.
Bank holiday	A day when most people have an official day off work and many businesses are closed. A bank holiday can also be called a public holiday.
Baron	A man who has one of the ranks of the British nobility. The title was particularly common during the Middle Ages.
BC	Before Christ – referring to the number of years before Jesus Christ was born – used as a time reference.
Bishop	A senior member of the clergy in the Christian religion, often in charge of the churches in a particular area.
Boom	A sharp rise in something – very often in business activity or the economy.

Brutality	Behaviour towards another which is cruel and violent and causes harm.
By-election	And election held in a parliamentary constituency or local authority area to fill a vacancy (see also General Election).
Cabinet (government)	A group of senior ministers who are responsible for controlling government policy.
Casualties (medical)	People who are wounded or killed (for example, in a war).
Charter (government)	An official written statement which describes the rights and responsibilities of a state and its citizens.
Chieftain	The leader of a clan in Scotland or Ireland.
Civil disobedience	The refusal of members of the public to obey laws, often because they want to protest against political issues.
Civil law	The legal system that deals with disputes between people or groups of people.
Civil service	The departments within the government which manage the business of running the country – people who work for the government can be called civil servants.
Civil war	A war between groups who live in the same country.
Clan	A group of people or families who live under the rule of a chieftain and may be descendants of the same person – a term used traditionally in Scotland.
Clergy	Religious leaders, used here to describe religious leaders in Christian churches.
Coalition	A partnership between different political parties.
Colonise	Inhabit and take control of another country. People who colonise are called colonists.
Commemorate	Show that something or someone is remembered.
Conquered	Beaten in battle.
Constituency	A specific area where the voters who live in that place (its constituents) can elect an MP to represent them in Parliament.

Constitution (law)	The legal structure of established laws and principles which is used to govern a country.
Convention (government)	An agreement, often between countries, about particular rules or codes of behaviour.
Criminal law	The legal system that deals with illegal activities.
Decree (law)	Official order, law or decision.
Democratic country	A country which is governed by people who are elected by the population to represent them in Parliament.
Devolution	The passing of power from a central government to another group at a regional or local level, which can then be called a devolved administration.
Dialect	A form of a language spoken by a particular group or people living in a particular area.
Domestic policies	Political decisions that relate to what is happening within a country (as opposed to in another country).
Electoral register	The official list of all the people in a country who are allowed to vote in an election.
Electorate	All the people who are allowed to vote in an election.
Eligible	Allowed by law.
Ethnic origin	The country of birth, someone's race or the nationality of someone when they were born/the customs and place from which a person and their family originated (or came from).
Executed	Killed as a punishment.
First past the post	A system of election in which the candidate with the largest number of votes in a particular constituency wins a seat in Parliament.
Franchise	The right to vote.
General Election	An event in which all the citizens of a country who are allowed to vote choose the people they wish to represent them in their government.

Government policies	Official ideas and beliefs that are agreed by a political party about how to govern the country.
Guilty	Found by a court to have done something which is illegal.
Heir	Someone who will legally receive a person's money or possessions after their death. The heir to the throne is the person who will become the next king or queen.
House (history)	A family (for example, House of York).
House of Commons	That part of the Houses of Parliament where MPs who are elected by the voting public debate political issues.
House of Lords	That part of the Houses of Parliament where people who have inherited their place or been chosen by the government debate political issues.
Household	A home and the people who live in it/something that relates to a home. (For example, household chores are tasks that are done around the house, such as cleaning and cooking.)
House of Parliament	The building in London where the House of Commons and House of Lords meet.
Illegal	Something which the law does not allow.
Infrastructure	Structured network that is necessary for successful operation of a business or transport system – for example, roads or railways.
Innocent (law)	Found by a court not to have done something illegal.
Judge	The most important official in court. The judge makes sure what happens in court is fair and legal.
Judiciary	All the judges in a country. Together, they are responsible for using the law of the land in the correct way.
Jury (legal)	People who are chosen to sit in court, listen to information about a crime, and decide if someone is guilty or innocent.
Legal	Allowed to do so by law.
Legislative power	The power to make laws.
Liberty	Freedom.

Magistrate	A person who acts as a judge in a court case where the crime is not a serious one.
Marital status	Information about whether a person is single, married, separated or divorced. This is often asked for on official forms.
Media, the	All the organisations which give information to the public, i.e. newspapers, magazines, television, radio and the internet.
Medieval/Middle Ages	In history, the period between 1066 and about 1500.
Monarch	The king or queen of a country.
National issues	Political problems that can affect everyone who lives in a country.
Nationalised	Bought and then controlled by central government – relating to an industry or service that was previously owned privately.
Nobility	The people in a country who belong to the highest social class, some of whom may have titles – for example, Lord, Duke, Baron.
Office, to be in	To be in power in government.
Olympics	International sporting event held every four years.
Opposition	In the House of Commons, the largest political party which is not part of the government is officially known as the opposition.
Pale (history)	Part of Ireland governed by the English.
Party politics	The shared ideas and beliefs of an organised group of politicians.
Patron saint	A Christian saint who is believed to protect a particular area or group of people.
Penalty (law)	Punishment for breaking the law.
Pope, the	The head of the Roman Catholic Church.
Practise a religion	Live according to the rules and beliefs of a religion.
Prime Minister	The politician who leads the government.
Prohibit/prohibition	Make something illegal.

Proportional representation	A system of election in which political parties are allowed a number of seats in Parliament that represents their share of the total number of votes cast.
Protestants	Christians who are not members of the Roman Catholic Church.
Public body	A governmental department or a group of people who represent or work for the government and who work for the good of the general public.
Public house/pub	A place where adults can buy and drink alcohol.
Reformation, the	The religious movement in the 16 th century that challenged the authority of the Pope and established Protestant churches in Europe.
Refugee	A person who must leave the country where they live, often because of a war or for political reasons.
Residence	The place where someone lives.
Rival viewpoints	Opinions held by different groups of people.
Rural	Countryside.
Scrutinise	Examine all the details.
Seat (Parliament)	A constituency.
Sentence	A punishment imposed by the court.
Shadow cabinet	Senior MPs of a political party not in government.
Sheriff (law)	A judge in Scotland.
Slavery	A system in which people bought and sold other people (slaves) who were forced to work without pay.
Sonnet	A poem which is 14 lines long and rhymes in a particular way.
Speaker, the	The member of the House of Commons who controls the way issues are debated in Parliament.
Stand for office	Apply to be elected – for example, as an MP or councillor.

Strike, to go on	Refuse to work in order to protest against something.
Successor (government)	A person who comes after another and takes over an office or receives some kind of power – for example, a son who becomes king when his father dies is his successor.
Suspend	To stop something from happening or operating, usually for a short time.
Terrorism	Violence used by people who want to force a government to do something. The violence is usually random and unexpected, so that no one can feel really safe from it.
<i>The Phone Book</i>	A book which contains names, addresses and phone numbers of organisations, businesses and individuals.
Theft	The criminal act of stealing something from a person, building or place.
Trade union	An association of workers formed to protect its members.
Treaty	An official written agreement between countries or governments.
Uprising	A violent revolt or rebellion against an authority.
Voluntary work	Work which someone does because they want to and which they do for free, i.e. they do not receive any payment.
War effort	The work people did in order to help the country in any way they could during wartime.
<i>Yellow Pages</i>	A book that lists names, addresses and telephone numbers of businesses, services and organisations in an area. Also available online at www.yell.com .